

UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT

for the

Eastern District of Tennessee

United States of America

v.

Regan Darby Prater

Case No.

3:25-MJ-2093

Defendant(s)

CRIMINAL COMPLAINT

I, the complainant in this case, state that the following is true to the best of my knowledge and belief.

On or about the date(s) of March 28, 2019 and March 29, 2019 in the county of Jefferson in the Eastern District of Tennessee, the defendant(s) violated:

Code Section

18 U.S.C. § 844(i)

Offense Description

Arson

This criminal complaint is based on these facts:

See attached affidavit of FBI Special Agent Thomas Calhoon.

☒ Continued on the attached sheet.


Complainant's signature

Thomas Calhoon, FBI Special Agent

Printed name and title

Sworn to before me and signed in my presence.

Date: 04/01/2025


Judge's signature

City and state: Knoxville, Tennessee

Hon. Jill E. McCook, U.S. Magistrate Judge

Printed name and title

UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT
EASTERN DISTRICT OF TENNESSEE
AT KNOXVILLE

UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

v.

REGAN DARBY PRATER

Case No. 25-MJ-2093

Filed Under Seal

AFFIDAVIT IN SUPPORT OF CRIMINAL COMPLAINT AND ARREST WARRANT

I, Thomas Calhoon, being duly sworn, do depose and state as follows:

INTRODUCTION AND AGENT BACKGROUND

1. I am a Special Agent ("SA") with the Federal Bureau of Investigation ("FBI") and have been so employed for over 26 years. From October 1998 to January 2005, I was assigned to the FBI's Miami Field Office, where I focused my investigative activities on organized crime. From January 2005 to August 2009, I was assigned to the Eureka Resident Agency of the FBI's San Francisco Field Office, where I investigated a broader variety of federal crimes, including a focus on drug and violent incident crimes. From August 2009 to March 2020, I was assigned to the St. Croix Resident Agency of the FBI's San Juan Field Office where I again investigated a broad variety of federal crimes, to include a focus on public corruption and violent incident crimes. Since March 2020, I have been assigned to the Knoxville Resident Agency of the FBI's Nashville Field Office, where I investigate matters of domestic terrorism. I am experienced in authoring affidavits for complaints and have been granted arrest warrants based upon those affidavits.

2. I make this affidavit in support of a criminal complaint and arrest warrant against Regan Prater ("PRATER") for a violation of 18 U.S.C § 844(i) (arson).

3. As an FBI SA, I have personally conducted, supervised, and participated in investigations which have resulted in the arrest and conviction of numerous individuals responsible for violating federal laws. Based on my training and experience with the FBI, I am familiar with various criminal statutes, including 18 U.S.C § 844(i).

4. The information contained in this affidavit is known to me through personal knowledge and information received from other law enforcement personnel. As this affidavit is being submitted for the limited purpose of obtaining a criminal complaint and arrest warrant, I have not included each and every fact known to me concerning this investigation. I have instead set forth facts that I believe are sufficient to establish probable cause for the Court to authorize a criminal complaint and arrest warrant against PRATER.

5. Section 844(i) provides in pertinent part:

Whoever maliciously damages or destroys, or attempts to damage or destroy, by means of fire or an explosive, any building, vehicle, or other real or personal property used in interstate or foreign commerce or in any activity affecting interstate or foreign commerce shall be imprisoned for not less than 5 years and not more than 20 years, fined under this title, or both.

FACTS SUPPORTING PROBABLE CAUSE

Background

6. According to its website and open-source information, Highlander Research and Education Center (“Highlander”) is a not-for-profit organization that works for justice, equality, and sustainability. Highlander, formerly known as Highlander Folk School, was established in 1932 in Monteagle, Tennessee (“TN”). In 1961, Highlander relocated to Knoxville, TN, where it remained until 1972. In 1972, Highlander relocated to New Market, TN, its current location. In 1955, Rosa Parks attended a workshop at Highlander, before refusing to give up her bus seat, an act that ignited the Montgomery bus boycott. In 1957, Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. joined with

the staff and participants of a leadership training conference at Highlander to celebrate its 25th anniversary.

7. The Highlander campus spans approximately 100 acres in New Market and can accommodate 35 guests, with additional space for camping. According to its website, Highlander regularly hosts in-person workshops. For example, the Children's Justice Camp is a one-week long session for youth ages 6-12. The youth directors for this program come from both Tennessee and several surrounding states. Highlander also rents, for a modest fee, their facility to other organizations working for social and economic justice. That fee can include overnight lodging with bedding and bath supplies and meals. By sponsoring in-person workshops and hosting other organizations, Highlander is involved in interstate commerce including the transportation of goods, services, and money across state borders.

8. The Legion of Saint Ambrose ("LoSA") was a white supremacist group whose members wanted to rebuild America as a white Christian nation. In its rhetoric and propaganda, and to justify its own extreme beliefs, LoSA utilized language lifted from the writings of various early Christian religious figures and Christian Orthodox theologians. LoSA distributed propaganda and participated in localized demonstrations and counter-protests. LoSA was formed in part by former members of the neo-Nazi Traditionalist Worker Party ("TWP").

9. TWP was a neo-Nazi group that advocated for racially pure nations and communities and blamed Jewish people for many of the world's problems. The group was allied with other prominent neo-Nazi and other racist organizations espousing white supremacist views. TWP helped organize the August 2017 Unite the Right rally in Charlottesville, Virginia, that erupted into a deadly riot.

10. Vanguard America was a neo-Nazi group, primarily of young white men, that emerged as a byproduct of the rise of the alt right segment of the white supremacist movement. The group started in 2016 in California as American Vanguard but changed its name to Vanguard America in early 2017. The group focused its energy on spreading racist flyers and posters, especially on college campuses. Vanguard America also took part in live events, including the Unite the Right rally in Charlottesville, where its contingent was highly visible.

11. Telegram is a free, cloud-based messaging application that allows users to send messages, photos, videos, and files. It also allows users to create groups for up to 200,000 people. It allows users to create channels to broadcast to unlimited audiences, make voice and video calls, and hold public livestreams. This application uses end-to-end encryption for voice and video calls, and in optional private chats called “secret chats.”

March 2019 Highlander Arson

12. On March 29, 2019, a fire consumed the administrative building of Highlander, 1959 Highlander Way, New Market, TN. At approximately 5:29 am (EST) on March 29, 2019, a 911 caller reported to the Jefferson County 911 Emergency Center (“E911”) that a fire was burning near the vicinity of Highlander. The New Market Fire Department (“NMFD”) was subsequently dispatched to Highlander. The structure was approximately 95% involved when fire units arrived on scene. One portion of the back wall of the building had collapsed and crawl space vents appeared to have blown away from the building. At approximately 6:55 am, NMFD contacted the State Fire Marshal’s Office, Bomb & Arson Section (State Fire Marshal’s Office, Bomb & Arson Section merged with the Tennessee Bureau of Investigation (“TBI”) during the time of this investigation), as the suspected cause of the fire was arson. Records show the fire

was under control at approximately 7:29 am. The building was a total loss, and the fire caused an estimated \$1,000,000 in damage.

13. On April 1, 2019, the scene examination began. Investigators from the State Fire Marshal's Office used a backhoe to remove heavy debris from the scene. The structure was a one level commercial building, approximately 3,419 square feet, which was being used as an office space for Highlander. An interior examination began by searching through the ash and debris left in the crawlspace where the floor had been consumed from the fire. Some of the joists had burn patterns indicating that there was heavy fire activity below the fire in the crawlspace. Investigators collected samples of ash and debris as evidence to be tested for the presence of accelerants. That evidence was later submitted to the Bureau of Alcohol Tobacco, Firearms, and Explosives ("ATF") Laboratory for analysis.

Regan Prater

14. On March 7, 2019, PRATER established utility service with Elk River Public Utility District for 1405 W. Lincoln St., Tullahoma, TN, 37388. The application for service lists PRATER, telephone number 931-409-4094, email address praterregan@gmail.com, as the owner of this residence.

15. On March 24, 2019, according to PRATER's phone web history, a webpage titled "process of preparing a napalm composition containing a finely divided inert carrier – google patents" was visited using the search engine Safari.

16. On May 1, 2017, PRATER was hired by a communications company for the position of mechanic technician 1, tasked with maintaining printing presses. On March 26, 2019, PRATER submitted a leave request for 8 hours of paid time off for March 29, 2019. At the time

this leave request was submitted, PRATER worked the day (first) shift at the communications company.

17. On March 26, 2019, PRATER, email address praterregan@gmail.com, billing/shipping address 1405 W Lincoln St., Tullahoma, TN, 37388, telephone number 931-409-4094, ordered in part, the following item on Amazon: Instant cold pack kit DIY 10 lbs. Instant cold packs typically contain ammonium nitrate.

18. The email address praterregan@gmail.com, recovery sms 931-409-4094, name on account Regan P, was created on or about December 12, 2011.

19. On March 27, 2019, PRATER received an email from Amazon notifying him that the “instant cold pack kit DIY” would arrive at 1405 W Lincoln St. between April 1 and April 3.

20. On March 28, 2019, PRATER clocked in for work at approximately 6:31 am (CST) and clocked out at approximately 3:15 pm.

21. On March 28, 2019, at approximately 8:06 am (CST), according to PRATER’s phone web history, a document titled “Mad Man’s Book of Formulas” was viewed via the Discord application, purchased, and downloaded. This document was described as a “cookbook of some of the most unusual recipes ever conceived” and included recipes for both ammonium nitrate and napalm. The explosive recipe using ammonium nitrate called for motor oil, of any weight from 10 SAE to 40 SAE to be mixed with ammonium nitrate at a rate of one-part oil to 8.5 lbs. of ammonium nitrate. It recommended first grinding the ammonium nitrate, the finer the better. The recipe for napalm called for one-part gasoline and one-part soap, specifically recommending Ivory soap bars, which must be shredded or flaked. The gasoline must first be heated before the flaked soap is added and then the mixture is stirred until it thickens.

22. On December 15, 2015, PRATER opened a Regions Bank checking account, account ending in xx4153. A debit card ending in xx4404 was associated with this account.

23. On March 28, 2019, at approximately 4:37 pm (CST), the following items were purchased at the Tullahoma, TN Walmart using PRATER's debit card ending in xx4404: 8-quart stock pot w/metal lid, Ivory original 10 bar (x2), Fels Naptha bar (x2), grater 9" tin 4-sided, blender, burner, and a digital scale. The following items were also purchased at the Tullahoma Walmart using PRATER's debit card ending in xx4404: 1-gallon gas can on March 15, 2019; 1-quart bottle of 10w40 motor oil and 2-liter cola (x2) on March 22, 2019.

24. On March 28, 2019, at approximately 6:33 pm (CST), PRATER's phone recorded an image being shared on Telegram of a white male wearing a balaclava-style facemask, holding a blue book in one hand with a cross on the cover, and cradling what appears to be a long gun with his other hand. At 8:11 pm (CST), a cropped version of this same image was again shared on Telegram.

25. On March 28, 2019, at approximately 8:29 pm (CST), PRATER's phone recorded an image being created of an individual resembling PRATER wearing a black t-shirt, black sunglasses, a black neck gator worn around his neck, and a skeleton facemask covering his mouth and nose. Additionally, at approximately 8:29 pm (CST), PRATER's phone recorded an image being shared on Telegram of what appears to be President George Washington wearing a tactical helmet with night vision goggles and the quote "gather the goons, it's time to go do hood rat shit."

26. On March 28, 2019, at approximately 5:31 am (CST), a \$24.63 gasoline purchase at a Mapco service station in Tullahoma, TN was charged to PRATER's debit card ending in xx4404. On the same day, at approximately 9:44 pm (CST), a second gasoline purchase at a

Speedway service station in Manchester, TN in the amount of \$22.08 was charged to PRATER's debit card ending in xx4404.

27. On March 28, 2019, at approximately 9:47 pm (CST), PRATER's phone recorded a search for Highlander Folk School Library – Historic Civil Rights Monument in the Waze application (“Waze”). At approximately 9:48 pm (CST), PRATER's phone recorded both a search and “navigate” for Highlander Research & Education Center, address Highlander Way, 1959, New Market, TN in Waze. At approximately 11:15 pm (EST), PRATER's phone recorded a search for Regions Bank ATM in Waze. At approximately 11:26 pm (EST), \$80 was withdrawn from PRATER's checking account ending in xx4153 at the Regions Ocoee Office ATM in Cleveland, TN.

28. According to Waze, it was approximately 99 miles from the Speedway service station in Manchester, TN to the Region Bank Ocoee Office in Cleveland, TN with a drive time of approximately 1 hour and 34 minutes. According to Waze, it was approximately 108 miles from the Regions Bank Ocoee Office in Cleveland to the Highlander Research and Education Center in New Market with a drive time of approximately 1 hour and 41 minutes. If PRATER drove directly to Highlander from Regions Bank, he would have arrived shortly after 1:00 am (EST) on March 29, 2019.

29. On March 29, 2019, between approximately 1:00 am (EST) and 2:00 am, PRATER's phone recorded approximately 246 steps taken and 159 meters traveled; between approximately 2:00 am and 3:00 am, PRATER's phone recorded approximately 3866 steps taken and 2855 meters traveled; and between approximately 3:00 am and 4:00 am, PRATER's phone recorded approximately 3723 steps taken and 2593 meters traveled.

30. According to Waze, it was approximately 67 miles from Highlander to Motel 6 on Murray's Chapel Rd, Sweetwater, TN with a drive time of approximately 1 hour. On March 29, 2019, at approximately 4:22 am (EST), PRATER checked into Motel 6 in Sweetwater as a "walk-in" with no prearranged reservation. PRATER checked out the same day at approximately 9:55 am. PRATER was charged \$81.43 to his debit card ending in xx4404. PRATER's contact number was 931-409-4094. At approximately 10:50 am, PRATER's phone recorded a search for Tullahoma in Waze.

31. On March 29, 2019, at approximately 12:53 pm (EST), a knoxnews.com cookie was captured on PRATER's phone. A cookie is typically a small text file that a website sends to your browser to track your activity. At approximately 12:54 pm, 11:18 pm, and again at 8:10 pm on March 30, 2019, PRATER's phone recorded an image being shared on Telegram of the Highlander administrative building engulfed in flames. Based on open-source information, this image was published by knoxnews.com at approximately 12:20 pm on March 29, 2019.

32. On March 29, 2019, at approximately 1:44 pm (EST), 10:17 pm, and 10:20 pm, cookies from Knoxnews.com and wbir.com were captured on PRATER's phone.

33. On March 30, 2019, at approximately 10:07 am (EST), 10:08 am, 10:10 am, 10:16 am, and 10:28 am, cookies from knoxnews.com, highlandercenter.org, twitter.com, highlanderfolkschool.weebly.com, and weebly.com were captured on PRATER's phone.

34. On March 30, 2019, at approximately 7:30 pm (EST), an additional knoxnews.com image of the burned Highlander administrative building was saved to PRATER's phone. At approximately 9:39 pm (EST), PRATER's phone recorded this image being shared on Telegram.

35. On March 30, 2019, at approximately 9:46 pm (EST), PRATER's phone recorded images and memes being shared on Telegram relating to Brenton Tarrant ("TARRANT"). The images and memes appeared to celebrate TARRANT's mass shooting of Muslims in New Zealand ("NZ") while also criticizing Muslims for their violent religion. TARRANT was arrested on March 15, 2019, after committing a mass shooting in Christchurch, NZ that killed 51 people.

36. On March 21, 2019, at approximately 10:25 am (EST), PRATER's phone recorded both a search and navigate for [REDACTED] in Waze. Based on open-source information, [REDACTED] is a part of the Antiochian Orthodox Christian Archdiocese of North America.

37. On April 4, 2019, PRATER, shipping address 1405 W Lincoln St., Tullahoma, TN, 37388, telephone number 931-409-4094, email address rustyshackleford1550@gmail.com ordered 2 lbs. of potassium chlorate, 10 lbs. of ammonium nitrate (agricultural grade), and one Hexamine from Fireworks Cookbook. Based on open-source information, Fireworks Cookbook is an online supplier of chemicals used in the manufacture of fireworks and explosives.

38. On April 4, 2019, at approximately 6:29 pm (EST), 6:30 pm, 6:31 pm, and 6:33 pm, cookies from twitter.com, usatoday.com, and nytimes.com were captured on PRATER's phone. At approximately 6:28 pm, an image of the Highlander administrative building engulfed in flames was saved to PRATER's phone. Based on open-source information, this image was published by nytimes.com on or about April 3, 2019.

39. On April 5, 2019, at approximately 5:39 am (EST), PRATER's phone recorded an image being shared on Telegram of various dates and locations superimposed over an image of a young child, giving a "thumbs-up."

40. On April 5, 2019, at approximately 2:08 pm (EST), PRATER's phone recorded an image being created of a blue book, with a cross on the cover, sitting on a leather jacket on a car seat. At approximately 2:08 pm, PRATER's phone recorded this image being shared on Telegram. This book appears to be the same book as the book in the image of the white male wearing a balaclava-style facemask, holding a blue book in one hand, and cradling what appears to be a long gun with his other hand, which PRATER's phone recorded being shared on Telegram on March 28, 2019, at approximately 6:33 pm (CST).

41. On April 5, 2019, at approximately 2:10 pm, PRATER's phone recorded an image being created of an individual's right hand covered in what appears to be grease, consistent with someone who works on printing presses. At approximately 2:10 pm, PRATER's phone recorded this image being shared on Telegram.

42. On April 6, 2019, Jefferson County E911 received an anonymous tip from a man who claimed to have infiltrated a group chat online via Telegram. The tipster, later contacted and identified hereafter as WITNESS 1, explained that one person in the chat, with the username "Sword of the Lord" discussed how the fire was started at Highlander. According to the caller, "Sword of the Lord" stated the fire was an arson, and sparklers and napalm were used to start the fire. "Sword of the Lord" also stated the device that was used to start the fire was placed under the floors at Highlander. At the time, facts surrounding the cause of the Highlander fire had not been publicly revealed.

43. The caller also explained that "Sword of the Lord" claimed to have confessed to starting the Highlander fire to an identified LoSA member ("Individual 1"). The caller told the dispatcher he would share with law enforcement captured screenshots of these conversations.

44. On April 8, 2019, after receiving this information, investigators returned to Highlander to search for new evidence. Investigators recovered small steel rods that were consistent with the shape and size of sparklers scattered throughout the debris. These steel rods were located near a corner of the structure. A depression in the ground in this area was also found. Investigators believed the depression may have been the seat of a small explosion. A soil sample was taken from this area to be examined for accelerants and explosive residue. The steel rods were also submitted as evidence.

45. On May 24, 2019, the ATF Laboratory issued its report related to previously submitted evidence. Fire debris recovered from the scene at Highlander tested positive for the accelerant gasoline. A pyrotechnic residue was identified, indicating the steel rods may have been in contact with a chlorate/perchlorate low explosive mixture, such as a pyrotechnic composition.

46. Based on this information, investigators concluded the ignition source was that of an open flame source, intentionally introduced by an individual to the combustible material/ignitable liquid vapors located in the area of origin which is believed to have been a sparkler bomb. The open flame source was either removed from the scene after ignition or consumed during the fire event. After careful examination of the fire scene along with any relevant reports and information available at the time, investigators opined that the fire was intentionally set. The fire was classified as incendiary.

47. On April 8, 2019, WITNESS 1 told the Jefferson County Sheriff's Office ("JCSO") that Individual 1 hosted several internet-based chats, sites, or forums where he would organize events to recruit and/or share information pertaining to LoSA. Telegram was one of the

sites used by Individual 1, where he is identified by his true name. WITNESS 1 gained access to the Telegram group by sharing a blocked-out version of his student ID card.

48. Once accepted, WITNESS 1 was added to the Telegram group chat, "Pastor Hagee's Back Shed ("HAGEE")." WITNESS 1 believed the group chat was meant to "vet" potential LoSA recruits prior to meeting in real life. WITNESS 1 estimated 8 to 11 people were in the group chat at the time of his involvement. WITNESS 1 was accepted to the group after the Highlander fire. After being accepted to the group, WITNESS 1 could see the names and profiles of the other group members. A person identified as "Rooster" was associated with the handle "Sword of the Lord."

49. WITNESS 1 was able to capture screenshots of group chats from HAGEE. In multiple screenshots, the user "Rooster" makes multiple posts. His profile picture appears to show a white male wearing a balaclava-style facemask, holding a blue book in one hand with a cross on the cover, and cradling what appears to be a long gun with his other hand. This appears to be the same image PRATER's phone recorded being shared on Telegram on March 28, 2019, at approximately 8:11 pm (CST).

50. In one HAGEE chat, "Rooster" stated, "Though I don't touch my prayer book while at work...This is why. Usually won't come off until several lava soap washes." Accompanying this statement was an image of an individual's right hand covered in what appears to be grease with a time stamp of 2:10 pm. This appears to be the same image PRATER's phone recorded being shared on Telegram on April 5, 2019, at approximately 2:10 pm.

51. WITNESS 1 later captures screenshots after "Rooster" was removed from HAGEE by Individual 1. The screenshots show "Deleted Account" above several posts. The

user that sent these posts was “Rooster.” In some of his posts, “Rooster/Deleted Account” gave certain personal details regarding his occupation, the type of church he attended, his location in relationship to Knoxville, and being a member of Vanguard America.

52. “Rooster/Deleted Account” stated, “I go to a small Antiochian Orthodox Church. I really like it.” Additionally, “I work with 80w90 gear oil a lot and various others. It’s also ink and occasionally blood. Printing presses suck.” Also, “I’m willing to go to Knoxville. It’s a few hours but a decent trip.” Finally, “as an industrial maintenance guy, that one always made me angry.” Accompanying this last statement was an image of various dates and locations superimposed over an image of a young child, giving a “thumbs-up.” As stated above, on April 5, 2019, at approximately 5:39 am (EST), PRATER’s phone recorded this image being shared on Telegram.

53. In another HAGEE chat, “Rooster/Deleted Account” posted a photo of a blue book, with a cross on the cover, sitting on a leather jacket on a car seat at 2:08 pm. This appears to be the same image PRATER’s phone recorded being created and shared on Telegram on April 5, 2019, at approximately 2:08 (EST) pm.

54. In one HAGEE chat, the Highlander arson investigation comes up in conversation. Individual 1 stated, “We already have antifa in Knoxville trying to frame us for that Highlander building burning down...Someone drew an Iron Guard cross on the pavement near it...” “Rooster/Deleted Account” replies, “I heard about that...Unfortunate...” Individual 1 later stated, “They got nothing though...Just their assertions, which isn’t evidence...” “Rooster/Deleted Account” replied, “Funny how none of the burglar alarms went off during the fire though.” Individual 1 responded, “Really is quite a mystery”

55. At the time of the fire, Highlander received burglar/fire alarm services from Murrell Burglar Alarm Services. A review of system data revealed burglar/fire alarm systems failed to notify Jefferson County E911 on the morning of the fire. This information was reported in the local news media.

56. On April 6, 2019, at approximately 12:41 am, user "Lucas Sheets" asked in HAGEE, "Why did rooster get removed?" Shortly thereafter, Individual 1 said, "I think he was antifa...He messaged me talking about something very relevant and very fedposty..." Based on open-source information, "Fedpost" means to post violent threats on the internet as an everyday citizen, but actually working as an undercover federal agent, as a form of entrapment; or the online posting of trigger words such as bombs, guns, kill, etc. that are intended to cause alarm and draw attention from law enforcement officials who may be monitoring.

57. Individual 1 later said in HAGEE, "Nah he was implying he did the thing." WITNESS 1 replies, "Trying to frame you for Highlander?" Individual 1 stated, "Nah he was saying he did that. I don't believe him, it's likely antifa or a cop fishing." When asked what Highlander was, Individual 1 responded, "Some civil rights building or something, apparently MLK Jr spoke there ..."

58. WITNESS 1 later posted in HAGEE, "Also I don't think he was antifa or a cop, his backstory all checked out. He was working at a printing press and his username was SwordoftheLord." WITNESS 1 sent a private message to "Rooster" via Telegram but didn't get an immediate response. He later received a response on or about April 6, 2019. The following summarizes their exchange:

WITNESS 1: Is it true you burned down highlander?

Rooster: I'm not admitting to anything, just as I didn't specify I did it to [Individual 1]. But it was arson, and there were no prints on the property.

WITNESS 1: Oh he was saying you did it

Rooster: I didn't admit that, but dots can be connected

WITNESS 1: Oh he said something about a device

Rooster: Yes...There was one put under the floor. It was a sparkler bomb and some Napalm

59. On April 30, 2019, PRATER's phone records the following exchange on Telegram between user "Senicide" and user "JoshBro":

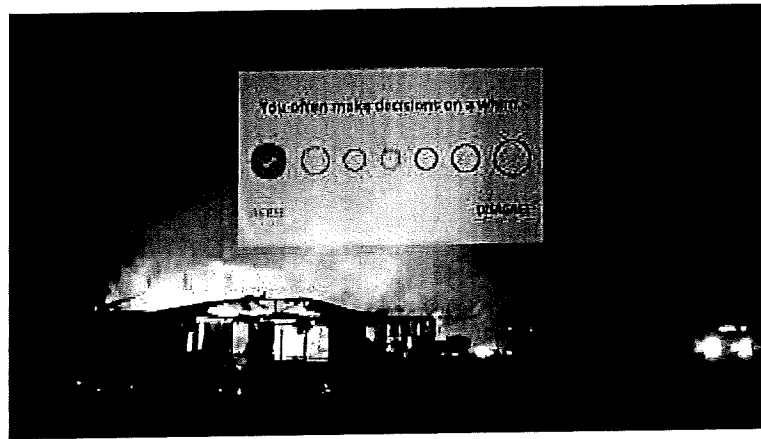
Senicide: I will say I was quite a degen before. Though no homo stuff at least

Joshbro: I've done a few degen things in my time

Senicide: I used to steal for fun. Also arson

60. On May 13, 2019, at approximately 12:27 pm (EST), PRATER's phone recorded the following post on Telegram from user "Senicide" to user "JoshBro": "tfw [that feeling when] you get bored one night and decide to commit arson."

61. On May 13, 2019, at approximately 12:28 pm (EST), PRATER's phone recorded the following image being created and shared on Telegram from user "Senicide" to user "JoshBro." The image depicts a photograph of the Highlander arson that was publicly available through multiple media outlets combined with another image indicating an agreement with the statement, "You often make decisions on a whim."



June 2019 Arson at The Fun Store

62. On June 16, 2019, the TBI and the Coffee County Sheriff's Office began investigating a suspected arson that occurred at the Fun Store, 5429 Hillsboro Viola Road, Manchester, TN. Upon arrival, the structure was 50% involved with fire, with most of the fire coming from the front of the structure. Hillsboro Volunteer Fire Department ("HVFD") was subsequently dispatched to the same location for fire suppression. During crime scene processing, a locked cell phone was discovered and was collected as evidence, to be submitted for further analysis. The cell phone data was eventually extracted.

63. On June 17, 2019, the TBI deployed an accelerant detection K-9 to the Fun Store fire scene. During the scene processing, the K-9 alerted to the presence of an accelerant at multiple locations within the scene. Soil samples and fire debris were collected from the fire scene and submitted to the TBI Crime Laboratory for further analysis.

64. On August 2, 2019, the TBI Crime Laboratory issued a microanalysis report. Analysis of the evidence revealed the presence of a medium petroleum distillate. Products in this range include, but are not limited to mineral spirits, some paint thinners, some charcoal starters, dry cleaning solvents, some torch fuels, some solvents for insecticides and polishes, and some lamp oils. Analysis also revealed the presence of an isoparaffin product. Products in this range include, but are not limited to some charcoal starters, some copier fluids, some aviation gasoline, some lamp oils, some solvents for insecticides and polishes and some camping fuels.

65. In October 2020, PRATER was indicted by a Federal Grand Jury for violation of Title 18, United States Code, Section 844(i), for the arson of the Fun Store. He was arrested on October 29, 2020.

66. On April 19, 2021, PRATER pleaded guilty to one (1) count of 18 U.S.C. § 844(i). The plea agreement was completed in the United States District Court for the Eastern District of TN. He was sentenced to serve 60 months incarceration and three (3) years' probation.

The TBI Phone Extraction

67. On March 17, 2020, TBI obtained a search warrant for the iPhone 6s (IMEI #355694075134412) that was recovered from the Fun Store crime scene. The evidence to be searched included records and information related to Tennessee Code Annotated 39-14-301- Arson, 39-14-302-Reckless Burning, 39-14-304-Aggravated Arson and 39-17-1003- Sexual Exploitation of Children.

68. In April 2020, after completing the phone extraction, investigators confirmed the owner of the phone was PRATER. The cell phone number assigned to the device was 931-409-4094. During the examination of the phone, two video clips were discovered. The first clip

depicted a person in possession of the phone inside the Fun Store, standing at a desk or counter, and lighting some type of accelerant. The second video clip was a “drive-by” in front of the Fun Store where the fire can be seen in the front window. A Telegram account with the display name “Senicide,” username “rev19” was discovered on the phone.

69. In November 2024, your Affiant discovered a prior FBI investigation involving a Telegram user with display name “Senicide,” later determined to be PRATER. A confidential human source provided screenshots of communications from “Senicide” in multiple Telegram group chats. Within the group chats, “Senicide” admitted to “posting” a building in Alabama, on behalf of Vanguard America. “Senicide” told others in the group chat he lived in-between Knoxville and Nashville.

70. On July 30, 2019, PRATER, using the “Senicide” display name, wrote, “Before I say this I should mention I’m not doing anything. But am I the only one who’s disappointed in “mass” shootings? Like every time theres one, except for Omar “see a gay, spray and pray” Mateen and the mossad op in Vegas, I think I could do much better...Like shit. If I ever snapped it would be Tarrant tier only on jews...” Your Affiant believes “Senicide” was referring to TARRANT.

71. On or about November 1, 2019, PRATER, again using “Senicide,” posted in a group chat he was part of the Tennessee Housing Development Agency (“THDA”), Keep My Tennessee Home Program. The post showed confirmation number 8735. According to THDA, PRATER of 1405 West Lincoln Street Tullahoma, Tennessee 37388, telephone number 931-409-4094, email address praterregan@gmail.com is a participant and assigned confirmation number 8735.

72. Between November and December 2019, PRATER transitioned from “Senicide” to the Telegram display name “Varangian.” The profile picture of “Varangian” was the same profile picture for “Senicide,” which shows a sword and black background. On November 6, 2019, at approximately 11:00 pm, PRATER, using “Varangian” says, “My pen name is Marshall...Marshall Riot ...”

73. On November 14, 2019, “Varangian” posts in a Telegram group chat, “There’s a rat in here...” At 7:44 pm, he wrote, “I just got a visit from some feds...” When he was asked in the chat what agency visited him, at approximately 9:41 pm “Varangian” replied, “FBI.” On November 14, 2019, FBI SAs interviewed PRATER in Tullahoma. During this interview PRATER, telephone number 931-409-4094, home address 1405 W. Lincoln St., Tullahoma, TN, described himself as an Orthodox Christian, who attended church every Sunday.

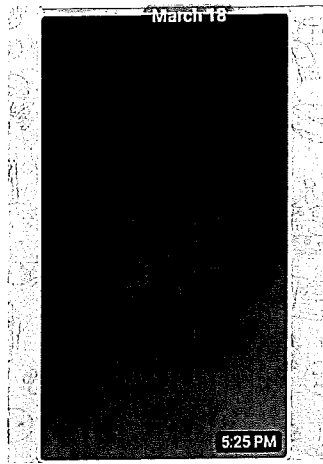
74. On December 1, 2019, “Varangian” sent a “final draft” of a document he wrote under the pen name “Marshall Riot” to another Telegram user. The document was titled “Written in Stone, Bound in Blood.” “Varangian” described this publication as being, “freely distributed to the people...It will serve as an encouragement and how-to in the defense of your Second Amendment rights in the Constitution of the United States of America.” “Varangian” also gave instruction on how to build sparkler bombs, make napalm, and build bombs that can take out or severely damage buildings.

75. “Varangian” wrote, “to make a sparkler bomb, simply tape one to some liquid containers, such as 2- or 3-liter bottles [PRATER’s Walmart purchase on March 22, 2019], milk bottles, gas cans [PRATER’s Walmart purchase on March 15, 2019], or any other similar item. Fill them with a roughly 85/15 mix of gasoline [PRATER’s Speedway and Mapco purchases on March 28, 2019] and motor oil [PRATER’s Walmart purchase on March 22, 2019] for a fast

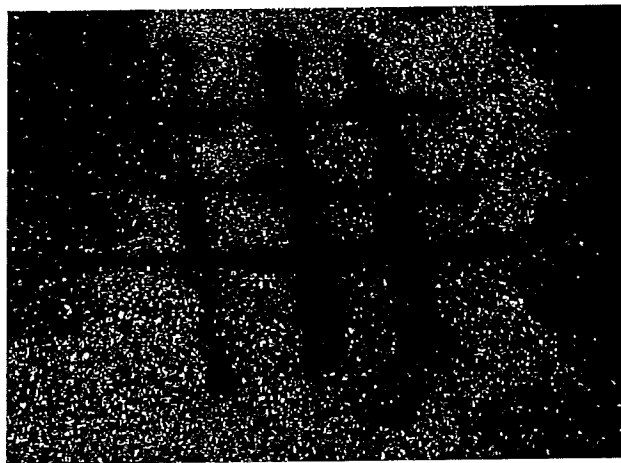
starting and long burning flame. One of these bombs can be utilized to take out or severely damage buildings. If the target building has a crawlspace, it is best to plant it inside the crawlspace if you can gain access. Otherwise, smash a window and toss it in.” The methods listed in the document are consistent with the origin and causes of the fires at Highlander and the Fun Store from 2019.

76. Specifically, from the arson scene at Highlander, investigators opined, a small explosion occurred in a crawl space beneath the building. Metal rods were collected as evidence from the same area, and soil samples from this area that tested positive for a pyrotechnic material. The same area also tested positive for the accelerant gasoline (ingredient in the “Mad Man’s Book of Formula” napalm recipe downloaded to PRATER’s phone on March 28, 2019). Additionally, from the June 2019 arson of the Fun Store, an accelerant detection K-9 alerted to the present of an accelerant.

77. On March 18, 2020, “Varangian” wrote in a Telegram group chat how they should develop a symbol to use when raiding, so they don’t raid each other. “Varangian” said, “What about a triple cross like the legion of Archangel Michael...Basically a hashtag but 3 horizontal and vertical...” The same symbol that was found spray painted in the parking lot next to the burned Highlander administrative building on March 29, 2019, and found on one of the firearms utilized by TARRANT during his March 15, 2019, mass shooting in NZ.



Symbol posted by Prater in a Telegram group chat



Symbol located in the Highlander administrative building parking lot

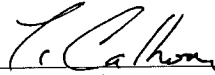


Screenshot from TARRANT's mass shooting video

CONCLUSION

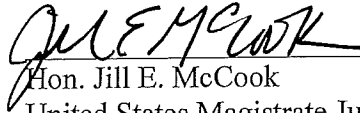
78. Based on the foregoing, I respectfully submit that there is probable cause to believe that, within the Eastern District of Tennessee, PRATER committed the arson at Highlander in violation of 18 U.S.C § 844(i).

Respectfully submitted,



Thomas Calhoon
Special Agent
Federal Bureau of Investigation

Subscribed and sworn to before me on April 1, 2025.



Hon. Jill E. McCook
United States Magistrate Judge